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Counterpunch

A Report from the Capital

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A Guide to U.S. Indonesian Policy

By Feb. 15, Bill Clinton must issue a progress report on workers' rights in Indonesia, where the Suharto dictatorship allows no independent trade unions and routinely beats and harasses organizers. Despite that, sources say the president will either declare that Indonesia is making marked improvement in its treatment of labor or seek a loophole, such as extending the review by saying more time is needed to gather information. Either decision would allow Jakarta to retain its special trade status, which allows an annual $650 million worth of Indonesian goods to enter the U.S. duty-free. Thus, Clinton will again demonstrate the Democratic difference in promoting human rights abroad.

The bipartisan foreign policy elite disagrees about the importance of some nations, but there is overwhelming consensus that Indonesia is vital to U.S. national security. "[Indonesia has] a huge population and [is] an important market for U.S. exports," a top administration source told researchers from the Washington-based Project for Demilitarization and Disarmament (PDD). "[It] has been a very strong supporter of the U.S. [military] presence in the East. They've been a voice for moderation in the Islamic world. They help to keep the Non-Aligned Movement moderate as far as North-South forums go."

Indonesia's supporters—from Congress to the business community to the Pentagon—have exerted extraordinary pressure to ensure that Clinton fully maintains America's longstanding alliance with Suharto, who seized power in 1965 and promptly oversaw the execution of an estimated 1 million suspected leftists, with thousands of key names provided by U.S. officials. The lobby they have waged is a case study in the way Washington really works.

Clinton has reversed Republican policy in some respects. At the U.N., the administration supported a resolution expressing "deep concern" about the situation in East Timor, a site of brutal human rights violations since Indonesia invaded that island in 1975. The president also angered Suharto by blocking the transfer from Jordan to Jakarta of American-made F-5E fighters.

However, Clinton has been careful to preserve the general warmth of Washington-Jakarta relations. He opposed an amendment offered by Russell Feingold (D-WI) which would have restricted arms sales to Indonesia and, most egregiously, he skirted a congressional ban on American-paid training of Indonesian troops by allowing Jakarta itself to pay for its soldiers military education.

Leading congressional pressure on Clinton is Bennett Johnston (D-LA), who publicly defends U.S. ties to Indonesia on strategic grounds. His real interest is economic, specifically support of Freeport-McMoRan, a Louisiana-based mining company with approximately $1 billion invested in Indonesian gold, copper and logging operations.

Johnston led a group of five senators on a trade mission to Indonesia in mid-January. The delegation stayed at Freeport's plush headquarters in Irian Jaya, the province where

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Indonesia, from p. 1

security forces were accused—in a press conference held the same month—of killing 13 villagers, including women and children. That didn't bother such junketeers as Alan Simpson (R-WY) and Robert Bennett (R-UT), who, according to a Senate source, returned from the trip defending Suharto's regime and saying that the human rights situation in Indonesia is not particularly troubling.

By the way, Freeport has paid Henry Kissinger more than $1 million in consulting fees for advising the company on its Indonesian operations. As part of his work, Kissinger in 1991accompanied company CEO James "Jim Bob" Moffett to Indonesia to introduce him to top figures in the Suharto regime. It therefore comes as no surprise to learn that Freeport operates in Indonesia with virtually no oversight and, according to local human rights activists, grossly exploits its labor force. Furthermore, peasants told a foreign investigator that company goons forced them off their property, which Freeport claimed, by chainsawing the stilts of their homes.

The Indonesia lobby's main task last year was defeating the Feingold amendment, which would have banned all arms sales to Jakarta. Under pressure from Suharto's congressional allies, Feingold altered the legislation so that the administration would merely be required to report on human rights abuses before approving the transfer of more than $14 million worth of weaponry. In that form, the amendment passed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and Feingold prepared to attach it to the foreign aid authorization bill.

However, Johnston opposed any conditions on aid to Indonesia and threatened to block the entire foreign aid bill if Feingold proceeded. That effectively killed the amendment. "Johnston is no cracker," says one source. "He's been in the Senate for 22 years and is a smart, deal-making son-of-a-bitch. You've got to worry about having him as an enemy."

Other important senate backers of Indonesia include:

- Daniel Inouye of Hawaii, a close friend of deceased dictator Ferdinand Marcos and a number of other Asian thugs, doggedly opposes all sanctions against Jakarta. Representing another state which has substantial business ties with Indonesia, a congressional source calls him a "whore for Suharto".
- California's Diane Feinstein, who is pressuring Clinton to rethink his veto of the F-5E transfer. That would benefit California-based Eidetics, which saw its plans to sell $1 million worth of spare parts for the fighters go down the drain when the president blocked that deal.
- Liberal Chris Dodd (D-CT), a man long enchanted with Pratt-Whitney, the Connecticut firm which builds the engines for Indonesia's F-16s.

Jakarta annually pays millions to top lobbying firms, with a major share going to Burson-Marsteller. But when it comes to direct pressure on Congress and the executive, the Indonesians rely on the U.S. business community, which drools with excitement at the thought of the $60 billion Suharto plans to dole out in infrastructure contracts during the next five years. U.S. firms also appreciate Jakarta's labor policies, which have kept average wages in manufacturing down to 28 cents per hour.

Corporate opposition to the Feingold amendment was coordinated by the U.S.-ASEAN Business Council and the American League for Exports and Security Assistance, whose members include such firms as McDonnell Douglas, Lockheed, Alliant Techsystems, GE and AT&T. The Council sent its representatives to the offices of every senator with a list of companies in their states that would allegedly be ruined if the Feingold amendment—or any sanctions against Jakarta—were approved. It also alerted hundreds of companies that deal with Indonesia of the grave threat the amendment posed, thereby provoking a flood of corporate calls to congressional offices.

The business blitzkrieg had a devastating impact, with Feingold's supporters dropping out in droves. Bob Dole, who had announced he would back the amendment, abandoned ship when he was squeezed by lobbyists from Boeing, a company with major operations in Wichita.

At the Pentagon, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Stanley Roth, a former aide to New York congressman Stephen Solarz, works hard to keep Clinton on a tight leash. Roth has had close personal friendships with top Indonesian officials since the late 1970s, when he visited the country at the invitation of the Jakarta-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, an intelligence front for the dictatorship. He's said to be particularly tight with Yusuf Wanandi, a top official at the CSIS who played a key role in secretly lining up U.S. support for the invasion of East Timor.

Roth's views, while more emotional because of his personal links, are reflective of the DoD as a whole. "The Pentagon is insistent on maintaining close ties with the Indonesian military," says a well-placed source. "Any attempt to change the relationship would provoke a strong and immediate reaction."

A final force in the Indonesia lobby is the international financial community, which has long heaped money on Suharto. Lending was traditionally coordinated by the Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia (IGGI), a 14-nation consortium set up shortly after Suharto took power and which included the World Bank and the IMF.

After Indonesian security forces massacred up to 250 unarmed demonstrators in East Timor's capital of Dili in 1991, the Dutch government, which chaired the consortium, said further loans should be tied to human rights conditions. A standoff ensued when Suharto's officials said they would no longer deal with the IGGI. The solution, arrived at by the World Bank, was to expel the Dutch. The consortium then reemerged as the Consultative Group on Indonesia and, under that name, will loan Jakarta more than $5 billion this year. (The sordid history of World Bank complicity with Suharto is detailed in a soon-to-be-released report prepared by the PDD.)

Arrayed against these forces is a coalition of badly outgunned human rights and church activists. As one source observes, "Stack the two sides up against each other and it's not too hard to predict who's going to come out on top." Despite that pessimistic assessment, the coalition has been remarkably effective in pressuring congress and embarrassing Suharto. That Bill Clinton has proved harder to embarrass in no way diminishes its achievements. •

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Capital Gang

Rep. Martin Hoke, a freshmen Republican from Ohio, caused a minor stir last year when he told *The New York Times* that he wouldn't mind dating Maria Cantwell or Blanche Lambert, two of his House colleagues. "They're hot," Hoke exclaimed to reporter Maureen Dowd.

Hoke's latest exploits have made him the clear frontrunner to the title of Dumbest Member of Congress, a contest sponsored by ***Counter*punch** with the winner to be announced later this year. Asked by a local network affiliate for comment on the president's State of the Union address, Hoke and Ohio Democrat Eric Fingerhut were wired up by producer Lisa Dwyer. As Dwyer walked away, Hoke gazed longingly and, in a mock accent, gleefully remarked to Fingerhut: "She has the beeeeg breasts." An open microphone caught his remark, but Hoke, unaware that his observations were being recorded, joked with his companion, "We're probably live."

The day after making his blunder, Hoke expressed a certain grim relief with an escaped Ohio convict's murder spree. The killings, he suggested hopefully to one reporter, might knock his comments off the front page of hometown newspapers.

Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, a walking conflict of interest, has a son who is following in his footsteps. Bearing the impressive title of deputy general counsel and assistant vice president, 26-year-old Michael Brown works for Global USA, a D.C. lobbying firm founded by three former Reagan administration appointees to the Commerce Department.

According to an acquaintance, Michael was rejected by Tulane University Law School despite vigorous lobbying on his behalf by Tommy Boggs, one of Louisiana's most influential powerbrokers and an old friend of Ron Brown's since they worked together at Patton, Boggs & Blow in the 1980s. Instead, Michael attended Widener University Law School in Wilmington, Delaware, one of the nation's 50 least selective law schools. The American Bar Association has no record of Michael Brown ever having passed the bar examination.

Despite his less than stellar academic accomplishments, Global USA reportedly pays Michael approximately $100,000 per year—more than what top law firms customarily pay recent Harvard graduates. Of course, Global USA's principal clients are Asian electronics firms, the same industry that Ron Brown lobbied for while at Patton, Boggs & Blow. The company's major American client, the South Louisiana Port Commission, is regulated by the International Trade Administration. The ITA is an agency of the Commerce Department.

As of Jan. 15, just two weeks after the North American Free Trade Agreement went into effect, more than 750 U.S. workers had been fired by U.S. firms moving to Mexico. The list of the newly unemployed, compiled by the AFL-CIO, includes:

- Approximately 135 workers at the Nintendo of America plant in Redmond, Washington.
- Three-hundred employees of Spokane, Washington-based Key Tronic Corp., a producer of computer keyboards.
- Forty employees of D.M. Steward Inc., an electrical components manufacturer from Tennessee.
- Three-hundred members of Paperworkers Local 7668 at an Emerson Electric Co. factory in Logansport, Indiana.
- An undisclosed number of workers at the Swingster Co. garment plant in Ocean Springs, Mississippi.

To help other U.S. firms make the same move, Irving, Texas-based NAFTECH hosted the "New Business Opportunity Conference" in late January. "There is more potential in Mexico than ever before," reads an ad the group placed in *The New York Times*. "[The Conference] provides information and allies to make your decisive entry into [the] contemporary Mexican arena."

Some 500 firms sent representatives to the three-day affair. The cost, including accommodations in Dallas, Mexico City and a Super Bowl Party in Acapulco, was $1,699. Assuming a 40-hour work week and taking the average wage of $1.25 per hour in U.S.-owned *maquiladora* plants, that price represents about 8.5 months pay for a Mexican worker.

As our lead story on Indonesia shows, there is little fundamental difference between Democrats and Republicans when it comes to the bottom line on foreign policy. For further evidence, consider a confidential memorandum Les Aspin recently sent to the heads of the military departments, explaining DoD participation in late February's "Asian Aerospace Exhibition 94" in Singapore:

"With the reduction of U.S. forces worldwide and the closing of facilities in the Philippines, the U.S. needs to show that the security of the Pacific region remains a top priority. High level Congressional delegations and Administration representatives have visited the area and reassured our friends that the U.S. has the will to maintain forward presence. An impressive display of U.S. defense technology at Asian Aerospace 94 will be an effective demonstration of this commitment. With the fastest growing economies in the world, Pacific Rim nations will continue to purchase military aircraft and other items for legitimate defense purposes. When such sales are made by U.S. companies they enhance rationalization, standardization, and interoperability with allied and friendly nations." •

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Letter from an old friend:

"A Strong Arm and the Will to Do the Job"

by Alexander Cockburn

Some time in early or mid-1949 a CIA officer named Bill (surname deleted) asked an outside contractor for input on how to kill people. Requirements of the performance envelope—inferring from the contractor's response later that year—included the appearance of an accidental or purely fortuitous terminal experience suffered by the Agency's victim.

There's a certain bluff innocence to the letter of Bill's contractor friend, who seems from the style to have been a doctor. The noun-heavy bureaucratic tone of the fifties is not yet apparent. The timbre belongs more to wartime commando exploits than to the chill advisories that lay ahead, far down the pipeline, in the form of the Assassination Manual furnished the *contras* in the early 1980s.

The relationship between the CIA and intimate assassination—as opposed to the sponsorship of mass murder as in the case of the Indonesian Communist Party—has been slowly slithering into view ever since the Church Committee hearings in the mid-1970s. The line served up for public consumption at that time was that the CIA might have nourished ideas of assassination, even tried—as in the case of Castro or Trujillo—to put them into play, but in no case had poison dart or hollowed bullet achieved its object. Or so the claim has always run.

Known CIA murder attempts can be traced at least as early as the Bandung Conference of the mid-1950s, when the Agency made a strenuous effort to blow up Chou En-Lai by putting a bomb on his plane. The bomb went off as planned and the plane fell into the South China Sea; Chou, having dallied in Hong Kong, escaped. The most recent known episode of assassination as an integral part of U.S. foreign policy came with the efforts to dispatch Mohammed Aideed of Somalia, said efforts approved by Clinton from his vacation home—the former residence on Martha's Vineyard of Robert McNamara.

The 1949 communication to Bill, which came just two years after the Agency was founded with a charter limiting its activities to gathering and analyzing foreign intelligence, shows assassination policy in process of evolution at a relatively early stage. Note that two methods favored by the CIA's consultant were already being inflicted on a very large number of Americans in lethal doses. Bill's friend suggests "exposure of the entire individual to X-ray;" or tetraethyl lead "dropped on the skin in very small quantities"—more dramatic than leaded gas, it's true, but not nearly as widely dispersed or so thorough-going in its application.

The memo to Bill follows, virtually in its entirety. ***Counter*punch** thanks John Kelly for supplying this vivid document:

Dear Bill:

I regret taking so long to supply you with my thoughts on the problem which you raised when I saw you last. Rather than attempt to organize a logical outline of all of the means by which the type of activity you mentioned might be accomplished, I am simply setting down the means that I think might be most efficacious.

You will recall that I mentioned that the local circumstances under which a given means might be used might suggest the technique to be used in that case. I think that gross divisions in presenting this subject might be (1) bodies left with no hope of the cause of death being determined by the most complete autopsy and chemical examination, (2) bodies left in such circumstances as to simulate accidental death, (3) bodies left in such circumstances as to simulate suicidal death, and (4) bodies left with residua that simulate those caused by natural death.

There are two chemical substances which would be most useful in that they would leave no characteristic pathological findings, and the quantities needed could easily be transported to the places where they were to be used. Sodium sluoacetate, when ingested in sufficient quantities to cause death does not cause characteristic pathological lesions...Tetraethyl lead, as you know, could be dropped on the skin in very small quantities, producing no local lesion, and after a quick death no specific pathological evidence of the tetraethyl lead would be present.

If an individual could be put into a relatively tightly sealed small room with a block of CO_2 ice, it is highly probable that his death would result and that there would be no chances of the circumstances being detected. It is highly probable, though, that there would be a period of hyporactivity in the course of such a death.

Another possibility would be the exposure of the entire individual to X-ray. When the whole body is exposed, a relatively small amount of radiation is sufficient to produce effects that would lead to death within a few weeks, and it is highly probable that sporadic deaths of this kind would be considered as due to blood dyscrysias.

If it were possible to subject the individual to a cold environment, he would freeze to death when his body temperature reached around 70 degrees, and there is no anatomic lesion that is diagnostic in such cases.

There are two other techniques which I believe should be mentioned since they require no special equipment besides a strong arm and the will to do such a job. These would be either to smother the victim with a pillow or to strangle him with a wide piece of cloth, such as a bath towel. In such cases, there is no specific anatomic change to indicate the cause of death, though there may be...marked visceral congestion which would suggest strangulation along with some other possibilities.

I hope you will forgive the random way in which I have set these things down...If I can be of any further aid to you, I hope you will call on me. •

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